



Weekly Special Report



Produced by the Public Affairs Section

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U.S. Embassy Hosts Iftar Dinner in Harrar

On August 26, 2009, the Embassy of the United States of America, hosted an Iftar dinner in Harrar for the Muslim community of Harar. The attendance included Harari Regional State Officials, religious leaders, elders of the community, leaders of the Region's Islamic Affairs Council, and members of the Harari Women and Youth Association. Over 400 people attended the dinner, including U.S. Embassy officials and those

in need from the local population. The dinner celebrated the longstanding friendship between the people of Harrar and of the United States.

The U.S. Embassy delegation to Harrar included Public Affairs Officer Alyson L. Grunder, Defense Attaché Col. Bradley Anderson, and two representatives of the U.S. military's chaplain corps, Imam Walid Habash and Reverend William Hood. Imam Habash and Rever-

end Hood are responsible for the spiritual well-being of soldiers in the U.S. armed forces. They represent the diversity of religious practice in the U.S., including in the U.S. military, which includes adherents to the faiths of Islam, Christianity, Judaism as well as other religions.

Imam Habash was invited to deliver remarks in Arabic at the evening prayers at the Grand Mosque.

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Remarks of President Barack Obama Ramadan Message

Washington, DC
On behalf of the American people – including Muslim communities in all fifty states – I want to extend best wishes to Muslims in America and around the world. Ramadan Kareem. Ramadan is the month in which Muslims believe the Koran was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad, beginning with a simple word – iqra. It is therefore a time when



President Barack Obama

Muslims reflect upon the wisdom and guidance that comes with faith, and the responsibility that human beings have to one another, and to God. Like many people of different faiths who have known Ramadan through our communities and families, I know this to be a festive time – a time when families gather, friends host iftars, and meals are shared. But I

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Special Envoy Graton Worked Together with Darfurian Factions for Unification

Factions of the Sudan Liberation Movement convened a consultative forum in Addis Ababa from August 18 to 22, 2009 under the sponsorship of the U.S. Special Envoy for Sudan, General J. Scott Graton. The African Union/United Nations Joint chief Mediator, Djibrill Bassolé, observed the meeting.

In a press conference General Graton and leaders of the factions gave on August 22 2009, General Graton said, "We worked together for the unification of the Darfurian factions. The leaders of the SLA/Unity, SLA/ Abdul Wahid and SLA/ Abdelshafi groups joined together and we started on the unification of the SLA movements. The URF (United Resistance Front) joined us and they agreed in principle on the unification between the factions until this unity is completed by full unification of all the Darfurian factions on the ground in Darfur at a later date."

Participants of the consultative forum include, Baha Idriss Abu Garda,



(L-R) Baha Idriss Abu Garda, Chairman, United Resistance Front; Ismael Rifa Osman, Head of Delegation, Sudan Liberation Movement; General J. Scott Graton, U.S. Special Envoy; Omer Ismail, Consultant of the U.S. Special Envoy, Ahmed Abdelshafi Toba, Chairman, Sudan Liberation Movement; Abdalla Yahya, Chairman, Sudan Liberation Movement/Unity.

Chairman, United Resistance Front; Ismael Rifa Osman, Head of Delegation, Sudan Liberation Movement/ Abdul Wahid; Ahmed Abdelshafi

Toba, Chairman, Sudan Liberation Movement/Abdelshafi; Abdalla Yahya, Chairman, Sudan Liberation Movement/Unity. ♦

U.S. Embassy Hosts Iftar Dinner in Harrar . . .

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His comments included quotes from the Qur'an and the Hadith about the rewards of the holy month of Ramadan.

The United States Government has provided funds to the Harari Regional State to support its efforts in

restoring the Teferi Mekonnen Palace and preserving Islamic manuscripts through the U.S. Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation. The U.S. Embassy plans to continue supporting the Harari community through educational, economic and cultural programs. In particular, a very successful English-teaching initiative – the Access Micro-

scholarship program -- began three years ago. This program provided supplemental English Language training to over 150 Harrar high school students. ♦

Remarks of President Barack Obama Ramadan Message . . .

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also know that Ramadan is a time of intense devotion and reflection – a time when Muslims fast during the day and perform tarawih prayers at night, reciting and listening to the entire Koran over the course of the month.

These rituals remind us of the principles that we hold in common, and Islam's role in advancing justice, progress, tolerance, and the dignity of all human beings.

For instance, fasting is a concept shared by many faiths – including my own Christian faith – as a way to bring people closer to God, and to those among us who cannot take their next meal for granted. And the support that Muslims provide to others recalls our responsibility to advance opportunity and prosperity for people everywhere. For all of us must remember that the world we want to build – and the changes that we want to make – must begin in our own hearts, and our own communities.

This summer, people across America have served in their communities – educating children, caring for the sick, and extending a hand to those who have fallen on hard times. Faith-based organizations, including many Islamic organizations, have been at the forefront in participating in this summer of service. And in these challenging times, this is a spirit of responsibility that we must sustain in the months and years to come.

Beyond America's borders, we are also committed to keeping our responsibility to build a world that is more peaceful and secure. That is why we are responsibly ending the

war in Iraq. That is why we are isolating violent extremists while empowering the people in places like Afghanistan and Pakistan. That is why we are unyielding in our support for a two-state solution that recognizes the rights of Israelis and Palestinians to live in peace and security. And that is why America will always stand for the universal rights of all people to speak their mind, practice their religion, contribute fully to society and have confidence in the rule of law.

All of these efforts are a part of America's commitment to engage Muslims and Muslim-majority nations on the basis of mutual interest and mutual respect. And at this time of renewal, I want to reiterate my commitment to a new beginning between America and Muslims around the world.

As I said in Cairo, this new beginning must be borne out in a sustained effort to listen to each other, to learn from each other, to respect one another, and to seek common ground. I believe an important part of this is listening, and in the last two months, American embassies around the world have reached out not just to governments, but directly to people in Muslim-majority countries. From around the world, we have received an outpouring of feedback about how America can be a partner on behalf of peoples' aspirations.

We have listened. We have heard you. And like you, we are focused on pursuing concrete actions that will make a difference over time – both in terms of the political and security issues that I have discussed, and in the areas that you

have told us will make the most difference in peoples' lives.

These consultations are helping us implement the partnerships that I called for in Cairo – to expand education exchange programs; to foster entrepreneurship and create jobs; and to increase collaboration on science and technology, while supporting literacy and vocational learning. We are also moving forward in partnering with the OIC and OIC member states to eradicate polio, while working closely with the international community to confront common health challenges like H1N1 – which I know is of particular concern to many Muslims preparing for the upcoming hajj.

All of these efforts are aimed at advancing our common aspirations – to live in peace and security; to get an education and to work with dignity; to love our families, our communities, and our God. It will take time and patient effort. We cannot change things over night, but we can honestly resolve to do what must be done, while setting off in a new direction – toward the destination that we seek for ourselves, and for our children. That is the journey that we must travel together.

I look forward to continuing this critically important dialogue and turning it into action. And today, I want to join with the 1.5 billion Muslims around the world – and your families and friends – in welcoming the beginning of Ramadan, and wishing you a blessed month. May God's peace be upon you. ♦

Obama Creates New Unit to Handle High-Level Interrogations

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — In an effort to gain more intelligence through “scientifically proven means,” the Obama administration has created a “high-value interrogation group” with responsibility for interrogating key detainees who are believed to have useful information on violent extremist groups, a White House spokesman says.

White House deputy press secretary Bill Burton told reporters August 24 that the new group, which President Obama created after receiving the consensus recommendation of an interagency task force, will be housed at the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).

“It will bring together all the different elements of the intelligence community to get the best intelligence possible based on scientifically proven methods and consistent with the Army Field Manual,” Burton said in Martha’s Vineyard, Massachusetts, where the president is vacationing.

“This is a way that the intelligence community can best operate, especially in these high-value instances,” he said.

In his January 20 inaugural address, President Obama said his administration “reject[s] as false the choice between our safety and our ideals,” and soon afterward he announced plans to close the Guantánamo Bay detention center in Cuba, abolish harsh interrogation methods by intelligence officers, halt military tribunals for suspected terrorists at Guantánamo for at least 120 days and end secret pris-

ons maintained abroad by the intelligence community.

The president also signed an executive order that abolishes any secret prisons abroad that have been used by the U.S. intelligence community for dealing with terrorists, and ordered that any interrogations carried out be under the terms of the U.S. Army Field Manual on interrogations, which is consistent with U.S.



Attorney General Eric Holder will be making the decisions on any prosecutions related to past interrogation practices.

treaties and the humane treatment of prisoners under international laws and obligations.

The 2006 Army manual the president cited in his executive order — Field Manual 2–22.3, “Human Intelligence Collector Operations” — complies with the Geneva Conventions and all its protocols, and explicitly prohibits torture and cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment. It also is in compliance with the U.S. Detainee Treatment Act of 2005.

The field manual outlines 19 legal interrogation techniques and forbids nine others.

Deputy press secretary Burton said President Obama signed an executive order to establish an interagency interrogation task force to “find new methods by which we can get more intelligence by scientifically proven means.”

The high-value interrogation group will house people from different elements of the intelligence community, including the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). “It houses all these different elements under one group where they can best perform their duties,” Burton said.

The president “has full confidence in this plan, and he’s going to continue to support it going forward,” he said.

According to an August 24 article in the Washington Post newspaper, the White House will have direct over-

sight over the new interrogation unit through the National Security Council. The Post also reported that the unit will be made up of experts from several intelligence and law enforcement agencies.

Asked about potential investigations and prosecutions of alleged abuses in the past by U.S. interrogators, Burton said President Obama believes those decisions should be made by Attorney General Eric Holder.

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Obama Praises Courage and Dignity of Afghan Voters

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — While results are not yet known in Afghanistan's presidential and provincial council elections, President Obama says the vote was "an important step forward" for the Afghan people in taking control of their country's future in the face of threats from violent extremists.

Despite attacks and threats of violence by the Taliban against those participating in the vote, millions of Afghans went to the polls August 20, Obama told reporters at the White House August 21.

"As I watched the election, I was struck by their courage in the face of intimidation and their dignity in the face of disorder," he said.

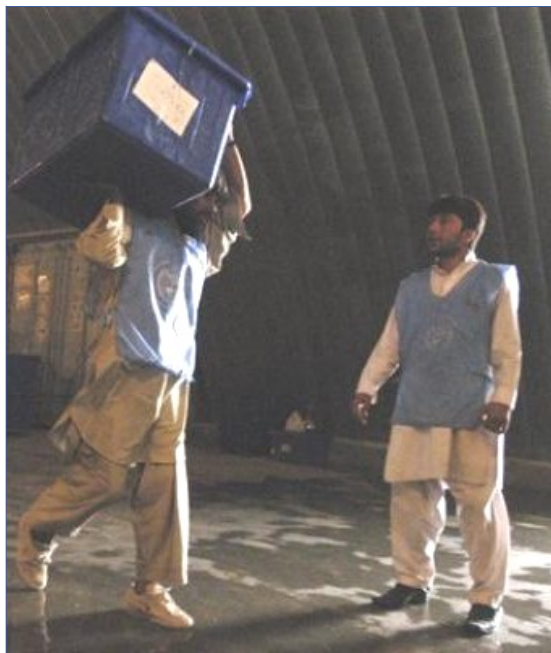
The president said there is "a clear contrast between those who seek to control their future at the ballot box and those who kill to prevent that from happening."

"I believe that the future belongs to those who want to build, not those who want to destroy. And that is the future that was sought by the Afghans who went to the polls and the Afghan national security forces who protected them," Obama said.

The president said the August 20 vote was historic as the first democratic election run by Afghans themselves in more than three decades. Afghan national security forces took the lead in protecting voters and providing security for approximately 6,000 polling stations, Obama said. There were more than 30 presidential candi-

dates and 3,000 provincial council candidates on the ballot, including a record number of women.

Obama repeated that the United States did not support any particular candidates in the election. "Our only interest was the result fairly,



Election workers carry ballot boxes to load onto trucks for transport to polling stations throughout the country, in Kabul, Afghanistan.

accurately reflecting the will of the Afghan people, and that is what we will continue to support as the votes are counted and we wait for the official results."

The president said the United States looks forward to renewing its partnership with Afghanistan under its new government. In the meantime, it will continue its work to strengthen the country's security, governance and economy.

"Our goal is clear: to disrupt, dismantle and defeat al-Qaida and their extremist allies. That goal will be achieved, and our troops will be able to come home as Afghans con-

tinue to strengthen their own capacity and take responsibility for their own future," Obama said.

"This is not a challenge that we asked for; it came to our shores when al-Qaida launched the 9/11 attacks from Afghanistan. But America, our allies and partners, and above all the Afghan people share a common interest in pursuing security, opportunity and justice," he said.

The president also took the opportunity to wish the Afghan people a blessed month of Ramadan. In a separate statement, the president said he wanted to reiterate his commitment "to a new beginning between America and Muslims around the world."

Since the polls closed in Afghanistan on August 20, the two leading presidential contenders, former Foreign Minister Abdullah Abdullah and incumbent President Hamid Karzai, both have claimed to have won an outright victory, or more than 50 percent of the

vote. If neither candidate wins an outright majority, a runoff election is expected to be held in October, according to press reports.

According to Afghanistan's Independent Electoral Commission, preliminary results indicate that up to 50 percent of the country's 17 million voters participated.

What foreign affairs decisions should President Obama consider? Comment on America.gov's blog Obama Today (<http://blogs.america.gov/campaign/2009/01/21/day-2-what-should-obama%e2%80%99s-top-priorities-be/>).♦

Clinton Focus on Food Security in Africa Extends Worldwide

By Jim Fisher-Thompson
Staff Writer

Washington — Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton's focus on food security and development on her recent trip to Africa extends to other parts of the world, such as Latin America and Asia, where the U.S. government continues to provide billions of dollars' worth of assistance.

Even before making her seven-nation visit to sub-Saharan Africa August 4–14, Clinton spoke of the need to tackle hunger while improving agriculture in the developing world.

At a meeting of international donors in Madrid in January, Clinton set out the Obama administration's position, saying, "The president and I intend to focus new attention on food security so that developing nations can invest in food production, affordability, accessibility, education and technology."

The United States continues to be the largest international food donor, providing more than half of all such aid to the developing world, according to the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the office responsible for administering most U.S. food aid programs. From 2008 to 2009, U.S. food donations committed to quell hunger in the world's poorest nations amounted to \$5.5 billion.

In recent years, USAID has provided emergency food relief to nations throughout Africa, as well as

to Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Burma, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Syria, Yemen, Colombia and Ecuador. In some cases, USAID bought and transported local food in nations without the means

to distribute the food to their impoverished people, including Ethiopia, Somalia, Nepal and Tajikistan.

In addition to critical food aid, USAID and other U.S. agencies such as the Peace Corps are working to improve agriculture and enhance rural livelihoods in developing nations.

In 2008, USAID responded to the devastation in Haiti caused by Hurricane Gustav with an ambitious five-

year program aimed at improving farmers' lives and raising their incomes through technological improvements, better health and nutrition and establishment of a natural disaster early warning system.

In Afghanistan, where agricultural infrastructure was damaged by decades of warfare, farmers are learning new ways to grow grapes with the help of a USAID program that worked with a local provincial reconstruction team. The farmers receive training in low-cost technologies, vine care, methods to increase production, and post-harvest storage and transport.

PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS WORK TO ENHANCE FOOD SECURITY

The Peace Corps, the U.S. volunteer agency established by Presi-

dent John F. Kennedy in 1961, has 2,800 volunteers working in 25 countries in Africa as language teachers, health care workers and rural development experts.

But 40 percent of its 7,000 volunteers, serving in 74 countries, are also involved in programs that support food security. The issue is of such importance that in 2008 the agency formed a worldwide food security task force whose goal is to gather information and resources to combat hunger.



A Mexican woman harvests coffee beans. USAID has helped the Mexican coffee industry find new exporting partners.



Dairy producer and USAID partner Karine Ghukasyan distributes milk to orphans in Vanadzor, Armenia.

Peace Corps volunteers are also part of business development programs in many countries, where they teach skills to young people, farmers, artisans, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), credit institutions and information technology enterprises.

In Ukraine, where the Peace Corps has operated development pro-

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Muslim Americans Find Their Voice Through Advocacy, Engagement

By Howard Cincotta
Special Correspondent

Washington — Assad Akhter, the legislative director for a member of Congress, learned an interesting fact when he helped found the Congressional Muslim Staffers Association at the U.S. Capitol in 2005.

"We discovered that holding events brings attention when you're Muslim," he said. "Being Muslim can bring negative attention, but it's also an opportunity to educate and talk to people."

Akhter is president of the 70-member association, which organizes Capitol Hill discussions on religious and policy subjects. He and other Muslim congressional staffers attend Friday prayers in the U.S. Capitol building that now attract more than 100 worshipers, including dignitaries from other countries.

YOUNGER GENERATION ENGAGEMENT

Akhter is hardly unique, especially among a younger generation that is taking advantage of the remarkable diversity and vitality of the Muslim-American population to bring a renewed message of inclusiveness and interfaith alliances that belie any stereotype of Muslims as monolithic in outlook and ideas.

Take Haady Taslim, 26, an Iranian American who taught in some of the poorest schools in New Orleans before working to register Muslim Americans in Chicago to vote.

"I don't think American Muslims are the only ones to gain when we engage in the process," Taslim said on the One Nation Web site. "America gains when American

Muslims become involved."

Razi Hashmi, born to a Pakistani father and American mother, struggled with his identity when he was a child. He found one answer in Islam. "Faith transcends race and culture," he said in an online profile.

But he also became politically active and organized a branch of the Muslim Students Association at his college. Hashmi is now head of the Oklahoma chapter of the Council on American Islamic Relations.

Lema Bashir, Palestinian American and a lawyer with the Department of Justice, sees political action among Muslim Americans happening on a much larger scale than previously.

"There is a need to recognize that you are American and this is your country," she said. "You have a background, you come from somewhere, we all do. But we also need to understand that living here means getting involved in the process. And everyone benefits from that."

JOINING THE NATIONAL DEBATE

Salam Al-Marayati long has been a national voice for Muslim Americans as executive director of the Muslim Public Affairs Council, one of the country's most prominent advocacy organizations.

Marayati contends that Muslims in America often find themselves



Salam Al-Marayati is executive director of the Muslim Public Affairs Council, a prominent advocacy organization.

caught up in international events over which they have no control. As a result, they frequently have to respond to actions by extremists that they themselves reject.

"Proving what we're not isn't a good media strategy," he said.

He cites the council's "Truth Over Fear" campaign to counter tensions and suspicion among Muslim and non-Muslim

groups. "My biggest challenge is to make extremists irrelevant and the mainstream relevant," he said.

Marayati points to the example of Sunni and Shiite divisions in the United States. "If young people feel psychologically that they are part of the American fabric, then the division is practically immaterial for them," he says. "If not, they can feel like visitors to America and become more open to outside or negative viewpoints."

The Muslim Public Affairs Council is part of a growing constellation of national organizations that are making Muslim voices and views heard. They include the large and influential Islamic Society of North America, the advocacy group Council on American-Islamic Relations, and the New York-based American Society for Muslim Advancement, which stresses its work in interfaith activities and cultural exchanges. Two active legal organizations have emerged as well: Muslim Advo-

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Mosque in Portland, Oregon, Reflects History of Islam in America

By Steve Holgate
Special Correspondent

Portland, Oregon — Many things about this particular mosque don't conform to the popular image shared by most Americans. The modest one-story building, with its co-located community center, boasts no minaret or dome. It has no high ceilings. Ironically, it is located on a street named after a Baptist minister, the Reverend Martin Luther King Jr.

Yet the members of the Muslim Community Center can trace their institution back further than any other mosque in Portland, Oregon. And its story reflects the recent history of Islam, not only in its home city, but in the United States, changing from a community focused on racial separatism to one that is open to all.

According to Shaheed Hamid, the mosque's imam, the mosque was established in 1968 as part of the Nation of Islam, an order that was then the most prominent Muslim group in the United States. The Nation of Islam and its most famous adherent, Malcolm X, preached a message of self-reliance and racial separatism. According to Hamid, the members of its Portland community fit that mold at that time.

Hamid, a stocky man who looks younger than his 60-some years, says that the Nation of Islam must be understood in the context of its time, with the group coming out of the American civil rights movement. Though its tenets were very different from those of most Muslims around the world, Hamid indicates that the Nation of Islam's members

largely were unaware of this. "Though we weren't practicing pristine Islam," he says, "you'd be pretty hard-pressed to say that we didn't think we were Muslims."

With the death of its leader, Elijah Muhammad, in 1975, the Nation of Islam began a transition. The impetus for change came from Elijah Muhammad's son, W.D. Muham-

The mosque began to encourage and participate in interfaith dialogues, reaching out to the local Christian and Jewish communities. The center began playing an active role in local political issues, inviting candidates and officeholders to dialogues with members of the mosque. Members have also participated in several "Days of Dignity," going to homeless people to offer



Muslim Community Center in Portland, Oregon

mad, who said, "Any true religion has to be for all people." This was much the same message that Malcolm X had begun to preach a decade earlier, but now it had been accepted as the truth.

This marked the beginning of dramatic changes for Portland's Muslim Community Center. The transition was gradual, however, as members began modifying prayer services, how they observed Ramadan and their study of the Quran. Though the center and mosque still served a primarily African-American community, they broadened the call to include all groups.

With a new identity, the mosque in Portland took on a new role and became more active in the broader community.

soap and toothbrushes and other personal hygiene items, and inviting them to the mosque.

The Portland community has reached back. After the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, Hamid says, the mosque "received great support from the local police," with two plainclothes officers supplying security during Friday prayers. Though the mosque received a few menacing telephone calls, Hamid says they were more than matched by many calls of support from Portlanders, Muslims and non-Muslims alike. Hamid says that a number of non-Muslim women offered to dress in Muslim garb as a show of solidarity, and accompany women from the mosque to grocery

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Mosque in Portland, Oregon, Reflects History of Islam in America . . .

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stores and on other errands.

He says the mosque emphasizes that Islam is a peaceful religion. "Allah orders us to be just, and to work toward bettering humanity," Hamid says. "That's Islam. We recognize that some segments of the Muslim community work against this, such as the Taliban and al-Qaida. We see them as corrupting the message of Islam."



Believers observing Friday Juma'ah service the Muslim Community Center in Portland, Oregon

While the Muslim Community Center and its mosque may have been the first of their kind in Oregon, they no longer are alone. Since the

1980s, a number of other mosques have been established, starting with one to serve Muslim university students in Portland. Other mosques

They have taken on an important and productive role in the larger community. ♦

serve Turkish, Yemeni and South Asian communities, as well as others. Relations among the mosques, Hamid says, "are excellent." He adds: "We are trying to be more visible, to admit persons of every ethnic persuasion and racial hue. Our services are open to all."

The Muslim Community Center and its mosque have come a long way from the days of separatism.

Muslim Americans Find Their Voice Through Advocacy, Engagement . . .

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cates, founded in 2005, and the nearly 500-member National Association of Muslim Lawyers.

GOVERNMENT VOICES

The voices of a new generation of Muslim-American officials are increasingly being heard in the federal government. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, for example, has appointed Farah Pandith to the newly created position of representative to Muslim communities. Pandith served for the last two years as the U.S. representative to Muslim communities in Europe. There, she organized multinational discussions around issues of how one can be both Muslim and Western, and how American Muslims manage their identities as both citizens and people of faith.

She anticipates a similar role in her new worldwide position. "To act as a facilitator, convener, an intellectual partner. And then walk away," Pandith said.

Dalia Mogahed, born in Egypt, is head of the Gallup Center for Muslim Studies and co-author of the authoritative survey "Who Speaks for Islam?" She has been appointed to President Obama's Advisory Council on Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships.

Ask her the book's question, 'Who speaks for Islam?' and she answers, "A billion Muslims do. Rather than letting vocal extremists define the



*U.S. Representative
Keith Ellison*

discourse, we should listen to the voices of ordinary people and thus let facts, not fear, shape our global engagement."

In Congress, Keith Ellison of Minnesota, an African American and the first Muslim elected to the House of Representatives, has been joined by a second Muslim congressional representative, Andre Carson of Indiana.

"I try to urge people to understand America is a country that has deep roots of tolerance and religious inclusion," Ellison says frequently in public statements. "Do good works, engage politically and get involved." ♦

New Documentary Film Explores Muslim Experience in America

**By Ahmed Mohamed
Staff Writer**

Washington — How do Muslims fit into contemporary American society? Members of a project led by former Pakistani Ambassador to the United Kingdom Akbar Ahmed sought to answer this question by traveling across the United States with a research team and film crew. One of the results is the documentary film *Journey into America*, which explores the evolution of American identity as seen through the lens of American Muslims.

Journey into America premiered July 4 at the annual Islamic Film Festival of the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) convention. The principal investigator, Ahmed, holds the Ibn Khaldun Chair of Islamic Studies at American University (AU) in Washington, and was supported by a team of his former AU students.

The film portrays the experience of Muslim Americans by examining various Muslim communities across America, from big cities in the East to small towns in the Midwest. The film focuses heavily on the voices of ordinary American Muslims and how Muslims fit into contemporary American society.

The research team traced the roots of Islam in America back to Sapelo Island, off the coast of Georgia. There they met a descendant of an African slave brought to the country in the 19th century. They also visited the oldest mosque in America in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. The film team conducted interviews with Muslim and non-Muslim students, political and religious leaders, and community members to explore the breadth of socio-cultural perception

of the Muslim-American community and the attitudes of that community.

"The film depicts a nine-month journey we took to over 75 cities and 100 mosques to study how Muslims were fitting into American society and to promote better understanding between Muslims and non-Muslims. Our film was featured as the special event at the Islamic Film Festival," said Frankie Martin, Ibn Khaldun Chair research fellow at American University's School of International Service. "The goal of our film and the work we've been doing at American University is to improve dialogue and communication between ethnic and religious groups in the U.S., which is what the Founding Fathers had in mind when they created this country 233 years ago."

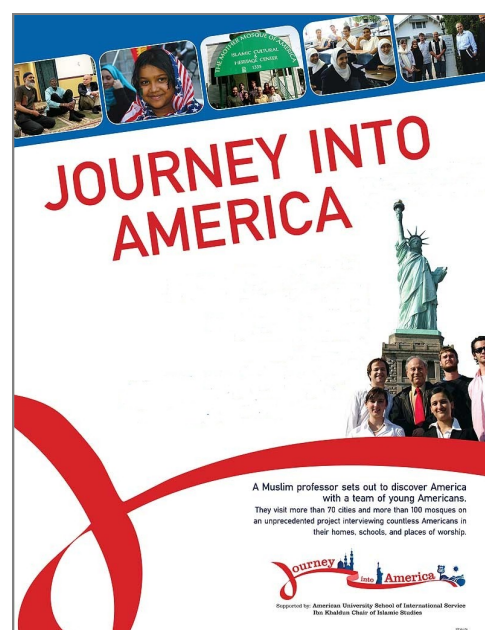
A panel of specialists in various fields moderated a discussion on issues raised by the film. The panel included ISNA President Ingrid Mattson, Akbar Ahmed, Imam Mohamed Magid of the Northern Virginia All Dulles Area Muslim Society Center, Rabbi Bruce Lustig of the Washington Hebrew Congregation and Riz Khan of the cable television network Al Jazeera English.

Mattson commented: "This is very refreshing ... to take away the fear of encountering those people in those places. ... There are many Americans who are really frightened of what might be going on behind the doors of the mosques. So to get in and to hear what's in those people's minds, it takes away the strangeness of it."

"We believe the film gives an unbiased and unprecedented look into

the lives of Muslim Americans. We heard stories of hope and compassion," said Jonathan Hayden, one of the film's crew members. "The film *Journey into America* is our contribution to education, understanding and dialogue," Hayden added.

Magid praised one scene in the film in particular, where the film crew visited a statue of Thomas Jefferson at the University of Virginia.



Jefferson was a passionate believer in a pluralist America. Under the statue, a tablet reads, "Religious Freedom, 1786 — God, Jehovah, Brahma, Atma, Ra, Allah." The fact that Jefferson had included "Allah" surprised the imam and reinforced the film's theme of American pluralism and interfaith dialogue.

"Muslim Americans respect the United States exactly for the values that Jefferson and the other Founding Fathers espoused," said Hailey Woldt, an Ibn Khaldun research fellow at American University and a

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Clinton Focus on Food Security in Africa Extends Worldwide . . .

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grams for more than 13 years, volunteers live and work in more than 217 towns and villages, and focus on community economic development projects. They teach free-market business skills while consulting with business associations, individual entrepreneurs, NGOs, schools and local governments.

Volunteers also organize training sessions on marketing, business infrastructure, sales techniques, and advertising and public relations for entrepreneurs and business students.

Private sector partnerships are another top U.S. development priority.

In South America, USAID is part of an innovative program with the Finance Alliance for Sustainable Trade (FAST), which consists of U.S.-based alternative lenders, importers and processors.

One partnership that began in 2003 with FAST partners — EcoLogic Finance and the Calvert Foundation, alternative investment funds — provided short-term trade credit to coffee producers in Mexico and Costa Rica. The initiative later expanded to coffee farmers in East Africa.

Altogether in Latin America, the USAID/FAST program has extended \$5.7 million in trade credit to 18 different coffee-farmer organizations and helped more than 4,000

small farmers improve their livelihoods.

In Armenia, USAID is working with private sector partners on a business advisory services program for farmers and the rural poor to help them set up small and medium-sized businesses. The three-year, \$1.6 million project teaches modern management practices and provides technical assistance and business consultancy to small enterprises in less-developed regions of the country.

(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://www.america.gov>) ♦

Obama Creates New Unit to Handle High-Level Interrogations . . .

(Continued from page 4)

“When the president appointed Attorney General Holder to the job, he said specifically that he wanted him to be independent and he wanted the Department of Justice to be an independent entity. He has great faith in Attorney General Holder, but he ultimately is going to make the decisions,” he said.

The president has also said Americans “should be looking forward, not backward,” Burton said, and Obama agrees with the attorney general that “anyone who conducted actions that had been sanctioned should not be prosecuted.”

According to news reports, Holder decided August 24 to appoint a prosecutor to probe nearly a dozen

cases in which CIA interrogators and contractors are accused of violating anti-torture laws and other statutes in their interrogations of suspects linked to violent extremist groups.

(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://www.america.gov>) ♦

New Documentary Film Explores Muslim Experience in America

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research associate at Georgetown University’s Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs. “Non-Muslim Americans who we spoke with for the most part expressed tolerance toward Muslims, although many admitted that they

simply did not know enough about Islam.”

Journey into America is a project sponsored by the Brookings Institution, American University and Georgetown University’s Berkley Center. In addition to the documentary, information and analyses from

the project will be featured in the forthcoming book *Journey into America: The Crisis of Islam* (Brookings Press, 2009).

(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://www.america.gov>) ♦

Hip-Hop Music an Outlet for Self-Expression

By Carolee Walker
Staff Writer

Washington — African-American and Latino teens with turntables and time on their hands in the 1970s invented hip-hop — a musical style born in the United States and now the center of a huge music and fashion industry around the world.

Hip-hop began 30 years ago in the Bronx, a borough of New York City and a neighborhood that seemed to exemplify the bleakness of poor urban places.

Using turntables to spin old, worn records, kids in the South Bronx began to talk over music, creating an entirely new music genre and dance form. This “talking over,” or MCing (rapping) and DJing (audio mixing and scratching), became the essence of rap music, break dance and graffiti art, according to Marvette Perez, curator at the Smithsonian Institution’s National Museum of American History in Washington, which launched its collecting initiative “Hip-Hop Won’t Stop: The Beat, The Rhymes, The Life” in 2006.

“Out of this forgotten, bleak place, an incredible tradition was born,” Perez said.

From the beginning, style has been a big element of hip-hop, Perez said. “Hip-hop tells the story of music, but also of urban America and its style.”

“With the significant contributions from the hip-hop community, we

will be able to place hip-hop in the continuum of American history and present a comprehensive exhibition,” Brent D. Glass, director of the museum, said.

The museum’s multiyear project traces hip-hop from its origins in the

late 1970s, as an expression of urban black and Latino youth culture, to its status today as a multibillion-dollar industry worldwide.

Perez said they have received collections from hip-hop artists

including Grandmaster Flash, Afrika Bambaataa, Kool Herc, Ice T, Fab 5 Freddy, Crazy Legs and MC Lyte.

“Hip-hop is the most important contribution to the American cultural landscape since blues and jazz,” said hip-hop artist and promoter, filmmaker and producer Fab 5 Freddy, born Fred Brathwaite. “It is dominant in every youth culture in every country.” According to statistics gathered in 2009 by Russell Simmons and Accel Partners, today’s global hip-hop community comprises 24 million people between the ages of 19 and 34, including a range of nationalities, ethnic groups and religions.

HIP-HOP CUTS ACROSS RACIAL LINES

“One thing that is applicable to every generation of teenagers is urgency,” music producer and film director Mark Shimmel said. Everything about hip-hop — the sound,

the lyrics, the style, the language — conveys that sense of urgency.

The sociological and cultural impact of rock ‘n’ roll pales in comparison to what hip-hop has been able to accomplish, Shimmel said. “Hip-hop is the singular most important melding of black and white cultures that has ever existed in the United States.”

Urban music, like Motown, “worked for white audiences,” he said, but you did not see blacks and whites together at live concerts.

Hip-hop changed that because it was about fashion and language from the beginning, and — most importantly — captured a sense of urgency that teenagers in the suburbs and in the cities could relate to, he said. “When hip-hop artists wrote about the world they saw in the inner city, black and white teens recognized that the isolation

of suburbia was not much different.”

Fab 5 Freddy, host of the television show Yo! MTV Raps in the

1980s, said hip-hop is successful because the music is “infectious” and because it allows people to express themselves in a positive, dynamic and consciousness-raising way. “Hip-hop is for everybody with an open ear,” he said.



Students perform at the Summer Humanities Arts Readiness Program in Washington, which encourages self-expression through hip-hop.



Hip-hop bands, including The Roots, performing here at an Independence Day festival, top the music charts and reach diverse audiences.

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Chinese Student Associations Help Newcomers Adjust

By Jeffrey Thomas
Staff Writer

Washington — One of the nicest things that can happen when you are coming for the first time to a foreign country to study is to find someone waiting for you on arrival who speaks your language and whisks you off from the airport to the brave new academic world you have chosen.

Students from China are fortunate that on many American campuses there is a Chinese students association (CSA) that greets and helps newcomers. In fact, Jin Yan, the vice president of the CSA at the University of Maryland and a graduate student in mathematical statistics, sees picking up newcomers at the airport and providing them with a temporary place to live as the biggest help she can provide. But CSAs do a lot more than meet and greet.

The Harvard Chinese Students and Scholars Association, like many similar organizations, takes new Chinese students to registration offices and banks, advises which mobile phone plan to choose and shows them supermarkets and shopping centers.

"To get them adapted to life as a graduate student, we try to instill courage and knowledge through either organized meetings or casual talking," says Wen Zhou, a Harvard doctoral degree student in biological and biomedical sciences. "We give them general advice on how to find good labs, what can be planned for different career tracks and what is not realistic. We are probably trying to accommodate them not to Boston, but specifically to Harvard, a highly competitive place with vast resources available."



The Harvard Chinese Students & Scholars Association sponsored an outing in Boston at TOMB, an interactive, walk-through adventure.

Offers of admission to prospective graduate students from China grew 13 percent in 2009, the fourth consecutive year of double-digit growth. The latest figures were part of a report issued August 20 by the Council of Graduate Schools.

According to the Institute of International Education, China was the second leading country of origin for international students in the United States in 2007–2008, with 81,127 students (up almost 20 percent from the previous year). India is first, with 94,563 students.

Two-thirds of Chinese students are enrolled in graduate programs, while one-fifth are enrolled as undergraduates and the rest are in various training courses.

Jin Yan doesn't see American culture as a big leap for new Chinese students at the University of Mary-

land, where the numbers of new Chinese students are growing. "We really still hold a Chinese life here," she said. It's up to the students themselves whether they want to get involved with the larger community.

Yu Jun, at left, a student studying statistics at the University of Virginia, converses with a student seeking to improve her Chinese. "Make your own decisions," is her advice to newcomers.

Wen Zhou sees new students for whom life in America is an easy fit because many have already visited the United States or other Western countries via on-site interviews, open houses or tours.

But for some students, the international experience is something new and challenging. "American culture

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Chinese Student Associations Help Newcomers Adjust . . .

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is apparently a big leap for most students and scholars who spend their undergrad years in China. Few of them can completely overcome the language and cultural barrier, though they generally have no difficulty in scientific communication. In our point of view, it is not absolutely necessary to become a true American. Rather, we should keep our Chinese characters as long as we find a way to make friends with people from all over the world," Zhou said.

Grace You, a doctoral degree student in Harvard's Department of Neurobiology, agrees. "Many students in China nowadays watch American movies and dramas, have easy access to the Internet and are capable of reading things in English, and might have friends who are already in the States. But even so, American culture is still a big leap

for most of them. Observing something as an outsider is definitely different than experiencing it on your own."

Most Chinese student associations consider it part of their mission to organize Chinese cultural events and help create a greater awareness of Chinese culture among Americans.

Zhou also enjoys meeting people and helping them. "Not until you talk with all kinds of people would you realize the diversity of life, nor would you find out how communication can inspire and elevate them," Zhou said, adding: "My purpose is to make most people happy with life."

Her advice to prospective students is to make sure they really love the major they are planning to pursue. "Think carefully before making a decision, rather than follow what

everyone else is doing. Gather as much information as possible. You will never ask too many people."

You advises prospective students to think clearly about why they want to study in the United States. "Be open to the outside world and interact with people. Though from time to time you will feel lonely, struggle with the language barrier and culture difference, and miss home, but if you keep trying you will be good."

"The learning environment here is really stimulating, and resources are ample," she added. "You need to make the most of it. All your efforts eventually will be paid off."

The U.S. Embassy in Beijing provides extensive information on the visa application process, including forms for applying electronically and information on how to make an appointment and visa wait times. ♦

Hip-Hop Music an Outlet for Self-Expression . . .

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In 1985, when Run-D.M.C.'s King of Rock became the first hip-hop record to "go platinum," an award given by the Recording Industry Association of America for the sale of 1 million records, it was apparent that hip-hop had crossed over from African-American and Latino urban music into white culture, Shimmel said. In 2005, OutKast's Grammy Award for Album of the Year was a first for a hip-hop album.

Shimmel said hip-hop today has not strayed far from its South Bronx roots. "Every musical form

evolves," Shimmel said. "Hip-hop started in New York, and it was interpreted differently in Los Angeles, and then the South added another element. It has evolved, but it hasn't changed."

LOOKING PAST ANTISOCIAL ELEMENTS TO GLOBAL IMPACT

Perez said some hip-hop music is notable for its disrespect of women, and the museum does not plan to dismiss this aspect of hip-hop. The so-called "gangsta" rap in the 1990s, with lyrics promoting drug use, violence and tagging, a form of graffiti used to mark territo-

ries, is a component of the hip-hop culture that cannot be ignored, Perez said, but "on the whole, the majority of hip-hop is creative and positive."

Hip-hop's influence both musically and culturally is global, Perez said. "The technique resonates throughout the United States and the world."

(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://www.america.gov>) ♦

U.S. Marks World Humanitarian Day, Announces Additional Aid

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — U.S. officials marked the first World Humanitarian Day by announcing an additional \$160 million to support global aid work and calling for governments and parties in conflict areas around the world to pay attention to the safety of humanitarian workers.

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton said in an August 19 statement that World Humanitarian Day is being observed to increase public awareness of the activities of aid groups and volunteers, as well as to honor their efforts to help the world's most vulnerable people.

Established by the United Nations General Assembly in 2008, the August 19 commemoration marks the anniversary of the 2003 Canal Hotel bombing in Baghdad that killed 22 people, including U.N. Special Representative and former High Commissioner for Human Rights Sergio Vieira de Mello.

"The success of our collective response to humanitarian crises rests on the selfless commitment and dedication of professional humanitarian aid workers," Clinton said. Aid workers, she added, increasingly are becoming the targets of violent attacks, with a record 260 workers killed, kidnapped or seriously injured in 2008 alone.

She called for governments and parties in conflict areas to "give their highest attention to the safety and security of humanitarian personnel." In a separate statement, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Susan Rice praised the "true, often unspoken heroes" in the aid community.

"They protect, feed and rescue the vulnerable of the world. They are an inspiration to us all," Rice said, adding that the United States will continue helping those in crisis and support the humanitarian work of the United Nations, nongovernmental organizations and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

At the State Department, Assistant Secretary of State for Population, Refugees and Migration Eric Schwartz told reporters August 19 that humanitarian relief work is "unfortunately ... a growth industry," with 42 million people — 25 percent more than in 2001 — uprooted by conflict and persecution around the world.

In addition, in 2008 more than 235,000 people were killed and 214 million affected by natural disasters, with an economic cost estimated at \$190 billion. Those figures are "far higher than the average for the six, seven or eight years before," Schwartz said.

\$160 MILLION FOR MORE HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

Schwartz announced that the Obama administration is marking World Humanitarian Day with the announcement of an additional \$160 million to support international humanitarian assistance and protection efforts, as well as work to create conditions for sustainable recovery. The total U.S. contribution to global humanitarian efforts for 2009 had previously been estimated at about \$4.5 billion, not including aid efforts by the U.S. military.

The assistant secretary said the new funds would include about \$58

million for assistance in Africa, "with a particular focus on Somali displaced, the Congo, Sudan and Chad," \$29 million to help Afghan refugees and conflict victims, and about \$71 million to "address critical crises in many of the other major refugee-producing regions of the world."

U.S. policymaking should have the protection of the world's most vulnerable people at its center, Schwartz said. "First, there's the moral imperative, the imperative of saving lives."

But he also said U.S. leadership on humanitarian issues allows it to influence aid principles, policy and programs.

"It's essential that we strengthen partnerships with key friends and allies and their populations and the populations of our adversaries, where our efforts not only help to break down negative images and stereotypes but also communicate to the world at large our commitment to principles of responsible U.S. engagement overseas," Schwartz said.

Third, he said, conflicts and human suffering affect prospects for stability and can "dramatically affect" U.S. interests.

The U.S. humanitarian engagement is remarkable, Schwartz said. "If there's an international humanitarian crisis anywhere in the world, the resources of the United States, of the Department of State and the U.S. Agency for International Development, the civilian resources of the United States, in one way or another, [are] likely to be there in support of protection of victims."

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Clinton's Message on Gender-Based Violence Resonates Worldwide

By Jane Morse
Staff Writer

Washington — Speaking out against gender-based violence was among the top priorities for Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton during her recent visit to seven countries in Africa, but it is a topic the United States takes seriously worldwide.

In Africa, however, violence against women is especially serious, and nowhere is it more horrific than in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), where fighting between factions has subjected women to unprecedented savagery — some 1,100 rapes are reported each month.

During an interview with Radio Okapi in Kinshasa August 10, Clinton condemned sexual violence in any context — as a tool of war or in a domestic setting. “There has to be strong prosecution and law enforcement and judiciary action to make it clear that this is unacceptable, that there is no excuse for it,” she said. Clinton also announced that the United States will provide \$17 million to help survivors of sexual violence in the DRC.

ANTI-GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE PROGRAMS INTEGRATED INTO MANY U.S. AID PROGRAMS

The U.S. government, for more than three decades, increasingly has recognized violence against women as a human rights problem with far-reaching consequences. But a report released in 2008 by the Congressional Research Service (CRS) — the public policy research arm of the U.S. Congress — found that there was no U.S. governmentwide coordination of efforts to combat violence against women. The Obama administration, however, has sought to institute leader-



Indonesian Muslim woman cover their mouths during a demonstration outside the presidential palace in Jakarta, Indonesia.

ship and coordination by appointing Melanne Verwee, a longtime advocate of women's rights and human rights, as the first U.S. ambassador-at-large for global women's issues.

There are approximately 350 government programs to aid victims of gender-based violence, spanning the work of eight agencies, the CRS found. Of these, 22 percent were operated in Africa, 21 percent in Europe/Eurasia, 17 percent in the Western Hemisphere, 14 percent in South/Central Asia, 14 percent in East Asia/the Pacific and 2 percent in the Near East. Ten percent were operated globally.

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Department of State (DOS) are the primary U.S. entities that implement U.S. international programs to combat violence against women (VAW), according to the CRS. Other agencies and departments that run some programs with anti-VAW components include the departments of

Defense, Health and Human Services, Justice, Labor, Homeland Security and the Peace Corps.

CRS found that U.S. activities revolve around five key issues:

Global Health. Recognizing that VAW often spreads sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS, the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) — a five-year, \$15 billion governmentwide initiative to address HIV/AIDS globally — has earmarked funds for activities with a gender-based violence component. In addition, USAID missions in Ethiopia, Egypt, Kenya and Guinea support programs to prevent female genital mutilation. Humanitarian Assistance and Refugees. Women and children often suffer the most during times of humanitarian crisis and/or armed conflict and are especially vulnerable to sexual exploitation. U.S. assistance in humanitarian and refugee settings generally incorpo-

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Telling America's story

U.S. Marks World Humanitarian Day, . . .

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Schwartz outlined U.S. aid efforts in Pakistan, where he said he was encouraged that more than half of the 2.2 million displaced by fighting have now returned to their homes, and in Sri Lanka, where he said the United States is concerned over the "involuntary confinement" of the 280,000 people who had been displaced by fighting between the Sri Lankan government and Tamil rebels.

"Everywhere around the world, displaced persons make their own judgments about when it is right to go back. And people, we have found, are pretty good judges of their own best interests," he said.

Turning to Iraq, Schwartz said that by October 2009, more than 30,000 Iraqi refugees will have been resettled in the United States. With 2 million displaced within Iraq, reset-

tlement "will not be the answer to this problem but can play a role in helping to assist those who are in greatest need."

Ultimately, Schwartz said, a refugee has three choices. "It's either third-country settlement, it's integration in place, in the place where they're getting refuge, or return [to their homes]. And we hope and believe that the answer for the vast majority of Iraqis who are outside their country of origin will be return."

But U.S. humanitarian efforts are focused on more than just the crises that make news headlines, he said. "That's not what humanitarians are supposed to do, and it's not what we do. We try to keep our attention focused anywhere in the world where large numbers of people are suffering and the dimensions of the crisis require some degree of international engagement." ♦

Clinton's Message on Gender-Based Violence Resonates Worldwide . . .

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rates programs to prevent violence against women.

Foreign Military Training. The issue of VAW awareness training and education for foreign military and peacekeeping troops was brought to worldwide attention in the 1990s by cases of sexual exploitation and abuse by U.N. peacekeepers in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Cambodia, East Timor and West Africa. Programs to combat violence against women are incorporated into training programs that the U.S. Department of Defense provides for international students and into foreign military training.

Trafficking in Women and Girls. The International Labour Organization estimates that 98 percent of

the women and girls caught up in human trafficking are forced into commercial sexual exploitation. U.S. agencies and departments support roughly 180 global and regional anti-trafficking programs in 90 countries.

Legal and Political Rights. Among a plethora of U.S. government programs, the State Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor funds initiatives in sub-Saharan Africa to support empowerment of women and youth. The USAID Office of Women in Development also supports programs to strengthen economic legal rights for women in Albania, Guatemala, Benin, South Africa and Rwanda.

**THE INTERNATIONAL VIOLENCE
AGAINST WOMEN ACT**

Although it is estimated that one in three women around the world will experience violence in her lifetime, many countries have no laws to prevent it. A report released by the U.N. secretary-general found that 102 United Nations member states have no specific laws on domestic violence.

The U.S. Congress is considering legislation that would tie U.S. economic assistance to governments to their treatment of women. In remarks delivered April 22 at the Georgetown University Law Center in Washington, Vice President Biden expressed his support for the legislation.

"I think we can affect that behavior [treatment of women] literally by the aid we give or withhold," Biden said. ♦